

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 29, 2005

Chairman Arlen Specter

Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services & Education
184 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Tom Harkin

Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services & Education
123 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Chairman Ralph Regula

House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services & Education
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member David Obey

House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services & Education
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Colleagues:

As Members of the New Democrat Coalition, we urge you to support the House appropriations level of \$125 million for health information systems as you move toward conference on the FY 2006 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill. The President has already shown his support for health information technology by including \$125 million in his budget submission.

Our healthcare system is plagued by rising costs and declining quality of care. Investing in health care information technology is a solution we can take to improve the quality of care, improve effectiveness and efficiency, and reduce overall health care costs. However, the use of information technology in health care lags significantly behind information technology in every other sector of our society. This lack of health information technology at the point of care is depriving our doctors and nurses of the opportunity to provide the highest quality of care to patients and is a source of enormous lost productivity.

Inadequate health information technology has resulted in medical errors, misdiagnoses and needless test duplications that increases costs and reduces the overall quality of health care. Last year alone, America's healthcare providers spent \$300 billion administering the wrong treatments to patients due to errors in record keeping. In hospitals, these errors led to the death of over 50,000 Americans. In spite of providing the most advanced medical care in the world, America's healthcare system is dangerously reliant on paper-based prescription and record keeping techniques that are expensive, inefficient, and even fatal.

Hurricane Katrina demonstrates the need for better electronic healthcare records as many paper records were destroyed in the flood. With an electronic healthcare system in place, natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes would not lead to the destruction of thousands of healthcare records. The safety and security of electronic healthcare records would ensure that the quality of care and efficiency would not be lost.

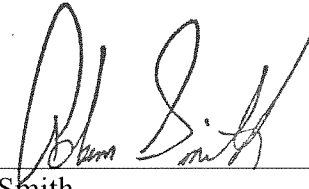
We can help create a better health care system in America, while also alleviating the growing financial burden on taxpayers and employers, but we need to act now. Although we face a difficult fiscal environment, we cannot afford to sacrifice our nation's investment in health information technology. We urge you to include funding in the Labor HHS Appropriations bill that would help establish the infrastructure necessary to support an interoperable health information technology system.

Thank you for your continued leadership. We look forward to working with you to bring our nation's health care into the 21st Century.


Sincerely,



Rep. Ellen Tauscher
Co-Chair, New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Adam Smith
Co-Chair, New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Artur Davis
Co-Chair, New Democrat Coalition



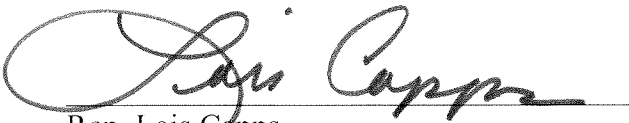
Rep. Ron Kind
Co-Chair, New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Brian Baird
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Melissa Bean
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Lois Capps
New Democrat Coalition



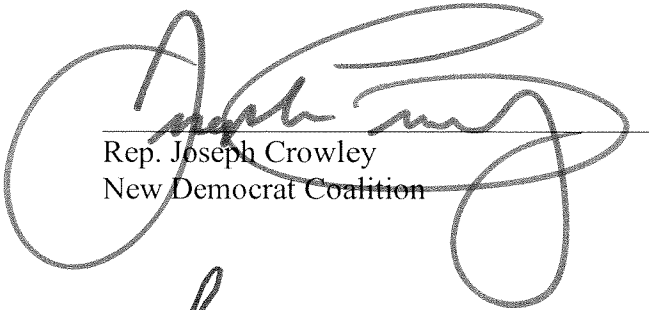
Rep. Russ Carnahan
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Ed Case
New Democrat Coalition



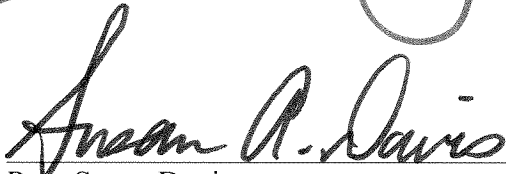
Rep. Ben Chandler
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Joseph Crowley
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Jim Davis
New Democrat Coalition



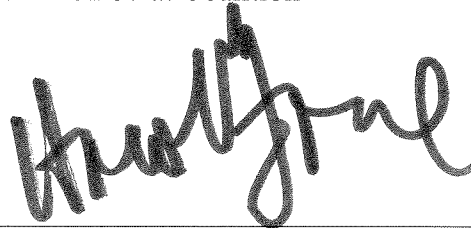
Rep. Susan Davis
New Democrat Coalition



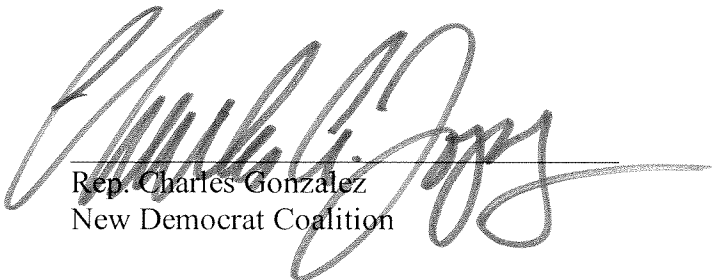
Rep. Rahm Emanuel
New Democrat Coalition



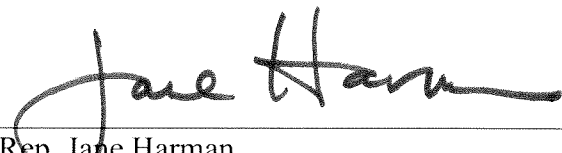
Rep. Eliot Engel
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Rep. Harold Ford
New Democrat Coalition



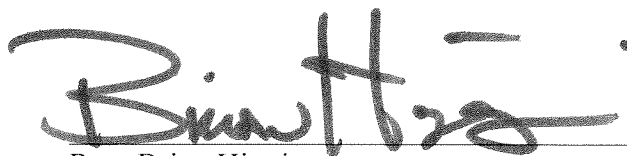
Rep. Charles Gonzalez
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Rep. Jane Harman
New Democrat Coalition



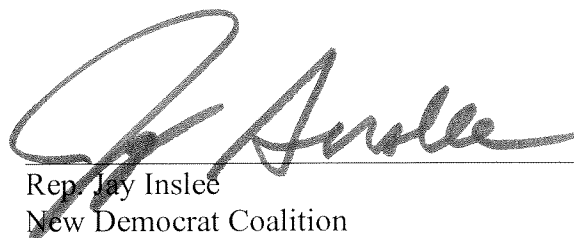
Rep. Stephanie Herseth
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Rep. Brian Higgins
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Rep. Rush Holt
New Democrat Coalition



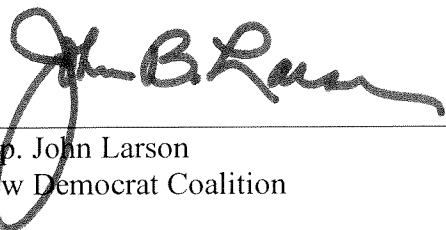
Rep. Jay Inslee
New Democrat Coalition



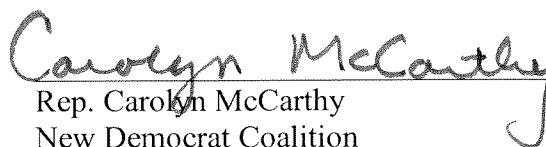
Rep. Steve Israel
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Rick Larsen
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Rep. John Larson
New Democrat Coalition



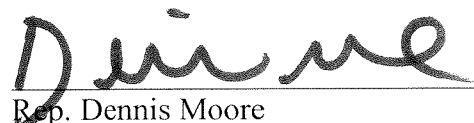
Rep. Carolyn McCarthy
New Democrat Coalition



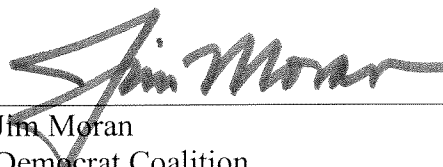
Rep. Mike McIntyre
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Juanita Millender-McDonald
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Dennis Moore
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Jim Moran
New Democrat Coalition



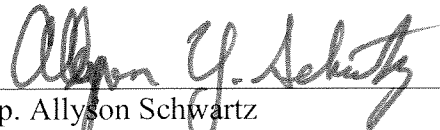
Rep. David Price
New Democrat Coalition



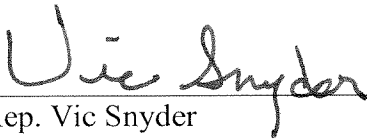
Rep. Loretta Sanchez
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Adam Schiff
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Allyson Schwartz
New Democrat Coalition



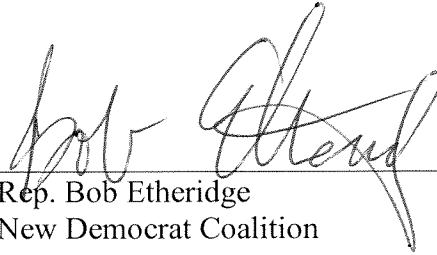
Rep. Vic Snyder
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Rep. Tom Udall
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. David Wu
New Democrat Coalition



Rep. Bob Etheridge
New Democrat Coalition